DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 177 362 CE 023 067

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TITLE Handbook for Career Specialization Programs.
INSTITUTION Research for Better Schools, Inc., Philadelphia, Pa.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE [78]
CONTRACT OB-NIE-78-0207
NOTE 46p.; For related documents see CE 023 015, CE 023 064-066, CE 023 166, and CE 023 170-172
AVAILABLE FROM Research for Better Schools, 444 North Third Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123 ($6.00)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Career Awareness; Career Development; *Career Education; *Career Exploration; Discovery Learning; *Experiential Learning; Guidelines; Learning Activities; Personal Interests; *Program Development; *School Community Relationship; Secondary Education; Vocational Interests

ABSTRACT

Designed for use with the Research for Better Schools experience-based career education model, this handbook offers procedures for designing and developing career specialization activities that will offer students an opportunity to learn on a one-to-one basis about one career. The first of six sections defines career specialization, provides suggestions for end products, and states the objectives of career specialization. Section 2 defines the roles of the student, career development staff, and employer. Focusing on learning activities in career specialization, section 3 serves as a guide for defining student interest, recruiting specialization sites and negotiating specializations with site personnel. The fourth section presents guidelines for preparing student learning contracts. A chart summarizing the various ways experience-based career education programs have awarded academic credit for specialization is presented in section 5. The final section focuses on the evaluation of the student's performance and end product. Appended material includes the career development student questionnaire, student interest form and questionnaire, student learning contract, student performance evaluation form, and an example career specialization program. (LRA)

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HANDBOOK

FOR

CAREER SPECIALIZATION PROGRAMS

Research for Better Schools, Inc.

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1700 Market Street/Suite 1700
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103

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The work upon which this publication is based was performed pursuant to Grant OB-NIE-78-0207 with the National Institute of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

The Handbook for Career Specialization Programs was written by Carmen E. McLeod.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Gregory Naylor for his assistance in identifying specific ideas and in securing materials for inclusion in this Handbook.

Thanks also to Richard Weisman for his editorial assistance in preparing the manuscript.

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INTRODUCTION

Career Specialization, as part of the Career Development Component, takes the learning process into the community and involves people and facilities outside the school, just as in Career Exploration. The difference is that Specialization offers students an opportunity to learn on a one-to-one basis about one career.

This Handbook for Career Specialization Programs has been prepared to offer procedures for designing and developing career specialization activities to the career development staff. It is also a resource for basic information, with samples included in the Appendix.

Career Specializations will be developed for the most part by the students, but without your energy and commitment, they will not be successful. It is important, therefore, to begin the specialization process with an effective student interview to determine career interests and goals that will lead to an effective learning contract.

When you recruit a new site, or approach a community person[1] already in your EBCE program, emphasize the fact that one-to-one learning activities are the most memorable and most intense for students. Students should expect to experience the specialization as participants rather than as passive observers. The most interesting specialization programs for students are those that stress "hands-on" tasks.

tasks. These opportunities allow the students to get in touch with real work assignments, real responsibilities, and real employer expectations.

CAREER SPECIALIZATION

Definition

Career Specialization is a unique, personalized activity in which the student investigates one career area in depth at one resource site. It is usually a decision made later by the student who has completed one or more explorations and is ready to try out an interest in a specific career area. In other words, Career Specialization is designed to:

- meet a wide range of interests
- permit reality testing of tentative goals
- acquire some knowledge, skill, and experiences necessary to achieve an anticipated career goal

The student selects the career to investigate, helps plan the learning activities, and identifies the personnel and resource site involved. The specialization consists of two elements: a learning contract and an end product.

Learning Contract

The Learning Contract is an agreement between the student and the community person to complete a certain number of objectives within a specified period of time. The contract outlines the specialization's objectives, activities, and product; method of evaluation; scheduling; and the

subject areas in which course credit will be earned.

End Product

During the specialization, the student works on a product that will reflect his or her interests. Some suggestions for end products are listed below. Each of these products has been developed and produced by students enrolled in RBS/EBCE programs.

Specialization Field	End Product
Hospital	Pictorial essay describing experiences was written
Mechanics	Report was written on kinds of repairs the student was able to complete.
Law	Report was written on courtroom and other activities; opinions and feelings about these experiences were included.
Electrician	A small motor was made by the student; he explained how it functioned.
Carpenter	Small table or stool was exhibited and the work involved from design to final product was described.
Architect	Scale model of a house was made and presented with a full description of the project.
Dentist	A set of false teeth were cast and presented; each tooth was identified.
Photographer	A series of photographs was developed during the experience and were displayed.

Objectives of Career Specialization

As a result of specialization, students are expected to:

- develop their abilities to be responsible for their own learning
- acquire basic skills and experiences related to a specific career area and apply this knowledge to tasks in that career
- analyze and report on implications of the specialization experience for personal career planning, that is, academic requirements and so forth
- apply recommended techniques in interviews with community participants
- define and develop learning activities, objectives, and criteria for evaluation in conjunction with career development staff and learning supervisor
- produce evidence (end products) of successful completion of the experience

It should be noted here that specialization does not have to be limited to specific job training. Independent study in academic areas or public service, for example, are legitimate parts of a secondary education. Some programs also offer students the opportunity to use paid experiences as specialization, if they meet the requirements.[2]

Nevertheless, some career focus is essential to specializations, and each one should have specific provisions for it.

ROLES IN CAREER SPECIALIZATION

Student

The development of a specialization is the primary

responsibility of the student, and concerns the student and the community person.

Students may begin specializations any time after they have completed at least one cluster experience. Most programs schedule specializations by the quarter or the semester.

Career Development Staff

The program staff's role is to identify specialization sites in the community, although students in some cases will find their own. In addition, staff may have to help students assess their interests.

Learning Supervisor[3]

The learning supervisor will be asked to provide reality-based experiences that offer the student a means to test emerging interests and goals, to offer learning activities that reinforce the end product the student is working on, and to involve the student in hands-on, work-related tasks.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN CAREER SPECIALIZATION

Specialization learning activities focus on specific areas of learning, such as a certain career or occupation, an academic interest, or a public service activity. As an opportunity for students to test their interests and abilities in specific areas, Career Specialization offers ways

for students to continue developing and expanding experience-based learning.

Defining Student Interests

Some students may have difficulty in expressing their interests or in deciding which interests to investigate. The following procedures have been used successfully in several ongoing programs. They are presented here as a guide or resource for defining student interests.

1. One-to-one interview

   a. Ask student to describe specialization interest (or previous explorations that he/she liked, hobbies, etc.).

   b. Repeat description to student for validation.

   c. If a specialization meets the student's interest more effectively than a career exploration cluster, continue to d. If an exploration is the best way to go, suggest that he/she continue with the exploration phase to help clarify further his/her career focus.

   d. Ask student to consider the following in order to develop a goal statement:

      - purpose of specialization
      - long-range career goals
      - desires, aspirations, values concerning educational goals

   e. Review this goal statement with the student.

   f. Explain responsibilities for a specialization and an end product.

   g. Advise student that you will search for a suitable site. (Many students may already have a site and personnel in mind.)

2. Questionnaires

Many programs have used assessment questionnaires with success. Please review examples in the Appendix.

a. Career Development Student Questionnaire from Program Monitoring Guide, pp. 27-28.

b. Student Interests Form

c. Questionnaire

Community Resources as Specialization Sites

The process of recruitment for specialization activities in many ways reflects the same procedures as recruitment for exploration sites; however, since specialization emphasizes a one-to-one relationship between the student and the community person, this recruitment process will focus more on the individuals at the sites than on the sites themselves.

Many specialization participants will become involved as a result of explcration activities already in progress and will want to continue relationships with a particular employee whose career interests the students.

Very often, students are encouraged to find a specialization site on their own. This has occurred very successfully in projects where a large number of students request specializations. (See Appendix for a sample of how one project accomplished this goal.) The career development staff should remember those sites that were contacted initially for exploration but could not accommodate more than

one or two students. These sites may want to participate in specialization activities.

A word of caution is necessary here. Although many exploration sites are willing to to take on specializations, it may not follow that specialization sites may never become exploration sites. This can be attributed to the physical size of the site or the interests of the community persons who participate.

Negotiating Specializations with Site Personnel

The following procedures were used by demonstration sites, pilot sites, and other schools implementing the RBS/EBCE program. They are offered here as a guide to negotiating the specialization activity with a community person.

1. Contact and arrange a meeting with the potential learning supervisor.

2. Explain the purpose of Career Specialization, the student's specific interest, and his/her goal statement (from the Student Interests form). If this is a new site, a general explanation of EBCE goals and purposes is necessary. In addition, the potential learning supervisor will need to acquire the support of top management before setting up the program. Such support will give the learning supervisor the authority and resources to follow through on program goals.

3. Ask the potential learning supervisor if specialization activity can be arranged and if he/she will work with the student to define activities and a product.

4. If the supervisor agrees, make an appointment with the student in question for final verification and

commitment. Explain to the student that the following events will occur. He/she will be required to:

- meet with the potential learning supervisor and career development coordinator
- explain his/her specific interest and goal
- describe an end product he/she would like to produce
- negotiate a learning contract and product that will satisfy both the student and the learning supervisor.[4]

Career Development staff should enourage the student to think about how much time he/she can put into the specialization and how long it should last.

5. Make an appointment to introduce the student to the supervisor.

6. Help the student describe the specific interest/goal and his/her end product.

7. Ask the supervisor if he/she believes the student can complete the specialization and end product.

The role of the Career Development staff here is to facilitate and act as adviser during the negotiation as the student and potential learning supervisor create the specialization activities and end product.

It is imporant to keep in mind that work-related activities that will offer maximum hands-on experiences are extremely important. It is equally important for the student to be involved in work-related activities that achieve the student's overall interest and goals. This may be achieved in discussions.

CAREER SPECIALIZATION ACTIVITIES FORM

OVERALL OBJECTIVES OF THIS SPECIALIZATION PROGRAM:

WORK-RELATED TASKS SELECTED	LEARNING OBJECTIVES	LEARNING ACTIVITIES
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.
6.	6.	6.
7.	7.	7.
8.	8.	8.

With regard to work-related activities, the career development staff may want to review other points to be considered, such as:

- availability of resource site staff
- appropriateness of work-related activities
- availability of equipment and supplies
- compatibility of the work-related activities to the end product
- constraint imposed by the resource site

In order to complete the meeting with the potential learning supervisor and student, the career development staff member can review the learning contract (activities, objectives, and end product that have been selected) and make any necessary changes, deletions, or additions. The final version of this information must be documented. This documentation becomes the Learning Contract.

PREPARATION OF THE LEARNING CONTRACT

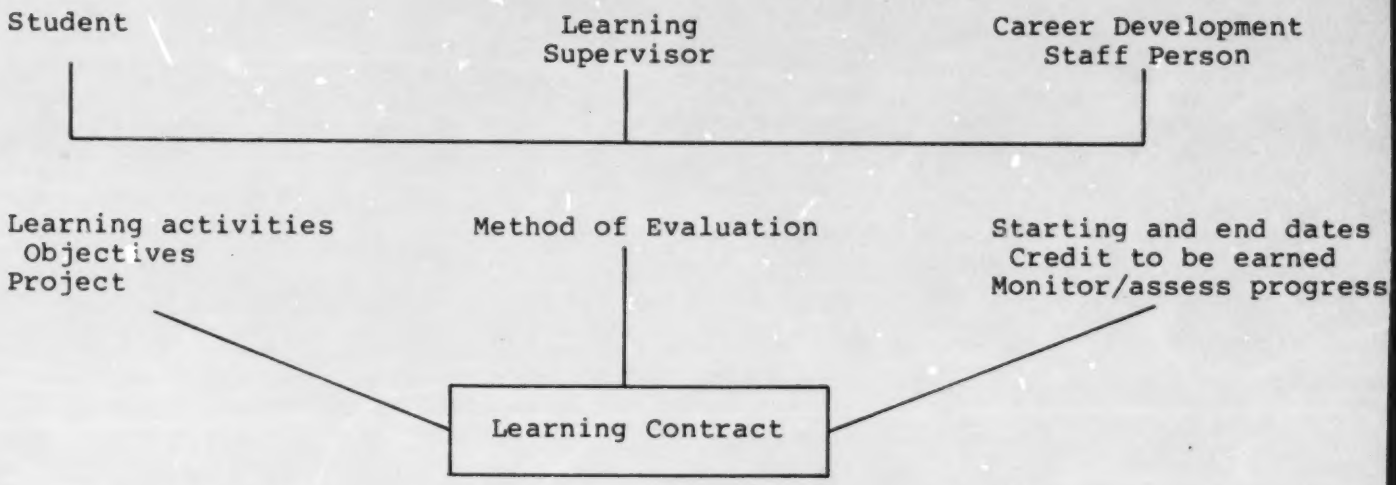
For purposes of standardization, each Learning Contract should contain:

1. name of student
2. title of specialization
3. name of learning supervisor
4. name, address, and phone number of employer site
5. day, time, and dates of specialization
6. academic credit to be received
7. overall objectives of specialization
8. learning objectives
9. learning activities planned
10. product student will produce
11. process that will be used to evaluate student's end product

Turn to the Appendix for a selection of Learning Contracts being used currently in various RBS/EBCE programs.

According to staff who have operated specialization activities at the demonstration site and other EBCE sites, the use of the Learning Contract has helped students acquire further ability in planning and decision making and in evaluating themselves with regard to personal career choices.

BASIC FEATURES OF THE LEARNING CONTRACT



The student, learning supervisor, or Career Development staff person can participate in evaluating the specialization at the end of the contract period.

ACADEMIC CREDIT

Many of the RBS/EBCE programs implementing specializations have awarded credit to the students. The following chart lists the various ways several of these programs have awarded academic credit for specialization.

Program Title	Location	Number of Students in Specialization	Academic Credit Earned	Curriculum Techniques Used to Plan Site Activities
EBCE	Greenville, SC	10-29	Vocational Elective or other	Learning Contract
EBCE	Lincoln, NE	30-50	Any, all	Learning Activity Packets (LAPS)
Teacher Corps Center for Career Education	Wilmington, DE	10-29	No credit	LAPS
Academy for Career Education	Philadelphia, PA	Over 50	Social Science	Learning Contract
EBCE	Providence, RI	10-29	Career Education	--
Career Planning Academy	Ft. Worth, TX	1-9	Career Exploration	--
Memphis EBCE	Memphis, TN	10-29	Elective	Learning Contract
Project Competence	Worcester, MA	30-50	Social Studies, English, Math	LAPS
EBCE	Luling, LA	10-29	Social Studies	Learning Contract

EVALUATION OF SPECIALIZATIONS

In most cases, the learning supervisor and student will develop a procedure or process through which the student's performance and end product can be evaluated at the completion of the specialization. For example, these evaluation procedures have been used when:

1. the supervisor administered a 25-item test
2. the end product was evaluated by the employer

If the employer wants to be involved in other areas of evaluation, these variables could be included:

- student preparedness
- student attitude
- cooperation with others
- appearance
- student ability to understand
- promptness
- attendance

Refer to the Appendix (p. A-10) for examples of student performance evaluation forms.

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name:_____

Date:_____

Listed below is a set of questions that relate to the kinds of experiences you have had while studying different careers in the community. Please respond to each of the following questions by circling the number that best describes your reaction to the question. Select only one answer for each question. Answer each question as honestly as you can. This is not a test and you will not be given a grade on how you answer. Your responses will be used to help improve career development activities in the community.

I Am Not Sure	Not At All	Very Little	Somewhat	Considerable	
1	2	3	4	5	1. How much opportunity have you had to interact with people performing different jobs?
1	2	3	4	5	2. How much opportunity have you had actually to perform some of the work required in various occupations?
1	2	3	4	5	3. How much opportunity have you had to ask the questions you wanted about different careers?
1	2	3	4	5	4. Have you been able to explore careers that are of interest to you?
1	2	3	4	5	5. How much opportunity have you had to learn the requirements necessary for gaining entry into different occupations?
1	2	3	4	5	6. How much opportunity have you had to learn how your high school coursework applies to various occupations?

Career Development Student Questionnaire

I Am Not Sure	Not At All	Very Little	Somewhat	Considerable		
1	2	3	4	5	7.	Do you feel that your involvement with community sites has been beneficial?
1	2	3	4	5	8.	How much opportunity have you had to practice mathematical skills while visiting community sites?
1	2	3	4	5	9.	How much opportunity have you had to practice reading skills while visiting community sites?
1	2	3	4	5	10.	How much opportunity have you had to practice writing skills while visiting community sites?
1	2	3	4	5	11.	How much opportunity have you had to practice speaking skills while visiting community sites?
1	2	3	4	5	12.	How much opportunity have you had to learn what you wanted to know about different occupations?
1	2	3	4	5	13.	How much opportunity have you had to explore a set of related careers?
1	2	3	4	5	14.	How much opportunity have you had to reinforce what you've learned in the community with homework assignments?
1	2	3	4	5	15.	How much opportunity have you had to discuss your career plans with people at community sites?

From the Program Monitoring Guide, 1978, pp. 27-28.

16. If you could change anything about the experiences you had in the community, what would you change?

17. What have been the most rewarding experiences in the community that have helped you learn more about careers?

18. Please indicate any other comments about your experiences in visiting community sites.

STUDENT INTEREST FORM*

1. Describe the student's interest as succinctly as possible in the space below.

2. Describe the student's previous activities related to this interest (including participation in a Career Exploration or completion of the Career Clarification Program.

3. Translate the interest description into a goal statement that describes, in an ideal sense, the purpose of a program specifically suited to meet the interest expressed above.

Possible resource site _____

Product to be produced _____

*From Developing Instructional Programs for Career Specialization, Research for Better Schools, Inc., Robert Holden, 1975.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The following list of questions has been used at various times to assess the student's interest for specialization activities.

Complete the following items.

1. List three things you are interested in.

2. List three occupations in line with your interests.

3. List three things you can do well.

4. List three reasons why people work.

5. What causes occupations to be added or eliminated?

6. Where could you get information about occupations that interest you? (Name as many resources as possible.)

STUDENT LEARNING CONTRACT

Student_____Grade_____

Cluster_____

Specialization Title_____

Resource Site Coordinator_____

Resource Site Supervisor_____

Resource Site_____

Address_____

_____Telephone_____

Scheduled Day and Time_____

Credit to be received_____

_____

Overall Objectives:

Learning Activities:

Learning Objectives:

Product(s);

_____

Evaluation Process:

_____

Date of Contract_____ _____
Student

_____
Resource Site Supervisor

_____
Resource Coordinator

CAREER SPECIALIZATION PROGRAM

Computer Technology

OBJECTIVES:

a. To understand the basic skills needed to enter the field of data processing and computer operations.

b. To have physically performed one simple operation/activity on each piece of equipment covered in the internship.

c. To gain exposure to the mechanics and tasks associated with computer programming and write, compile, and debug a simple program.

TIME: Approximately 9:00-3:00

SCHEDULE:

Session	Date	Agenda
1	January 10	The punched card-description, types, use. Keypunching and verification-129 operation.
2	January 17	Continuation of session 1 subject matter.
3	January 24	Continuation of Session 2 subject matter.
4	January 31	The operation of EAM equipment (i.e., sorter, collator, interpreter, reproducer).
5	February 7	Continuation of session 4 subject matter.
6	February 14	Continuation of session 5 subject matter.
7	February 21	The operation of the GE115-both card and tape applications.
8	February 28	Continuation of session 7 subject matter.

Session	Date	Agenda
9	March 7	Use of the COBOL programming language and DARE including writing, compiling, and debugging a simple program.
10	March 14	Continuation of session 9 subject matter.
11	March 21	Continuation of session 10 subject matter.

J.H. Durant, Manager
Information Systems
General Electric Company

STUDENT PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

NAME_____

SPECIALIZATION_____

AGENCY_____

Responsibility_____

Cooperation_____

Dependability_____

Appearance_____

Knowledge of duties_____

Initiative_____

Performance_____

Rapport with coworkers_____

Additional Comments_____

SUPERVISOR_____

DATE_____

ACADEMY FOR CAREER EDUCATION

At Olney High School

Name of Volunteer_____

Assignment_____

Period of time covered by evaluation

from_____ through_____

		RATING
1.	Reports to assignment on time	_____
2.	Relates to office staff	_____
3.	Displays courtesy	_____
4.	Relates to clients	_____
5.	Displays patience	_____
6.	Shows interest and enthusiasm	_____
7.	Approaches duties with seriousness	_____
8.	Performs duties effectively	_____
9.	Asks questions when in doubt	_____
10	Accepts supervision in positive manner	_____
11.	Shows growth as a result of experience	_____
12.	Remains at assigned area, unless on assigned errand, until time to go off duty	_____

Based on ratings on each of the above, volunteer's overall rating is _____

Comments

_____

_____

_____

Academy for Career Education

CHARACTERISTICS	Superior	Good	Average	Poor
Leadership	( )	( )	( )	( )
Ability to follow instructions	( )	( )	( )	( )
Mental alertness	( )	( )	( )	( )
Cooperation with authority	( )	( )	( )	( )
Cooperation with peers	( )	( )	( )	( )

Recommendations

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Date_____ _____
name of person evaluating

_____
signature

Date_____ _____
signature of volunteer

A COMMUNITY PERSON VIEWS SPECIALIZATION

Joseph Durant
Director of Information Systems
General Electric Company
Re-Entry Systems Division
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

We at General Electric became involved with the Career Specialization program in 1971 through recruitment effort of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce on behalf of the Academy of Career Education. Our public relations officer, who is very active in the Chamber, was contacted to see if we would provide resources for the Academy's Career Development activities. We discovered that there were specific areas of specialization the Academy staff were seeking, one of which was the area of computer science and data processing. I was asked if I was interested in supporting such a Program. After speaking to various people at General Electric, I found that we had supported similar programs in the city before, and since this kind of program was in concert with our various affirmative action and community involvement goals, it was a good program to support.

Commitment

To make a Career Specialization program successful, you must have the support of every person involved, from top management to the instructor/workers who will be involved with the students. In selecting the person who will develop

and operate the program, top management must select someone who has a high degree of personal commitment. In addition, top management must give this person full authority to carry out all phases of the program; this includes control over and the assignment of adequate resources--people, instructors, training materials, and so forth.

We are often asked, "What do you get out of it? Why are you making this commitment?" There is no question that it costs us money to use valuable resources--resources being our staff, machines, and the time we devote to our students. But we do get something back. For example, the program helps us maintain a positive corporate image in the community. In addition, it can help foster the development of specific skills needed in our labor market.

One of the problems we have found in the past few years is a deterioration in the attitude of workers. To balance this, we attempt to develop positive work attitudes. We find we can instill in students the desire to perform difficult work at a quality level. We've had several students who, after taking the initial introductory program to data processing, have asked to come back to take the computer programming course. They seem to like it here. That's why we feel that committing these resources is an advantage of us. It really works!

Student Involvement

The key step in the Career Specialization program is in selecting the students. Before we agree to take any student in, we conduct an indepth interview. The students must contact me on their own and make all arrangements. When they come in, they are interviewed carefully. As a result, the first thing students learn is what I, the employer, have to offer in a Specialization program, and what they can expect from it. For example, in my field--computer science and data processing--there are many career paths students can follow, such as business data processing, the scientific application of computers, and simple computer programming and systems design; each of these represents a very different career path for students. They may say, "Computers sound like a lot of fun," but they can be very surprised and badly disappointed if they don't know exactly what we have to offer. So I give them the background information to make sure this is what they really want to do. During the interview, it's important to take students out to the work area so they know exactly where they will be and what the work environment is like, because they will be there for thirteen weeks, one day a week. If they are unhappy with the work environment, they will not have the right attitude when they begin work.

If I have the particular resources in Career

Specialization a student is looking for, then I'll discuss his or her personal requirements, because the next step is to tailor the program to the specific needs of the student. Not every student comes to me with the same level of understanding and background. For example, I had one student who only wanted to get involved in computer operation, but did not want to operate the machines. This required an entirely different approach to structuring the twelve- to thirteen-week program. I had other students who already had a course in computer programming; it would have been a waste of time to have them scheduled to operate the keypunch machines, sorters, and related kinds of equipment. Once I have ascertained the student's background, I can construct a specific program tailored to his or her individual needs. In a successful Career Specialization, the students must be considered first. You must know what their needs and interests are; then you can take the resources you have and tailor them to their particular needs and interests.

The next thing I like to make clear to the students is that I set high goals and standards. I take no nonsense from the students; I let them know what I expect from them. They are going to be graded and evaluated according to the specific objectives of each program during the twelve- to thirteen-week period. For example, one objective might be to learn how to operate certain pieces of equipment success-

fully. A second objective might be to write one simple program in Fortran language and debug it to see if it operates successfully. We do not give any written test; we evaluate a student's progress by the kinds of competencies he or she develops and can demonstrate.

Student Attitude

If I find that the students are lukewarm, that they're searching, that they only think they will like it, I will push and probe until I reach the point where I am satisfied the students really want to perform. They're here to work and to learn for one full school day a week, and it's as important as any other regular classroom situation. Their attendance is recorded; if they are not going to be present, they are expected to call. They are expected to live up to the same standards of behavior as the rest of my employees. Once they understand that they are not here to be entertained but to learn, then we've reached a meeting of minds and we can begin the program.

Types of Training

The Specialization program must be a one-to-one or one-to-two relationship. I will not take more than three students, and they have someone--a high-level analyst, a computer operator, or a computer supervisor--with them full time. That means my employee is not performing productive

work for me in a regular business capacity, and this affects my cost. But this is the only way in which Career Specialization works. Too often in other situations students come in and merely walk through a tour and then are put in a corner, given a book or shown some slides. That is not learning through experience, which is the purpose of Career Specialization.

Hands-On Experience

The basic approach we use is hands-on experience. If a student is learning how to operate computer equipment, the first thing we do is take the student to the machine and explain how it operates. First the instructor demonstrates the equipment, and then the student tries the equipment while the instructor observes. Then the student tries it alone in a demonstration situation: we give the student a real task to do--albeit something rather simple--but a task he or she can evaluate in terms of actual performance. Finally, the student is critiqued. This process is repeated in each instance. A building-block approach is taken, starting with the simplest task, with each succeeding assignment demanding greater skill. This kind of instruction is complex, but in each instance there is measurable achievement so the student can recognize his or her accomplishments. A student's accomplishments must be measurable both

in his eyes and in the eyes of the instructor. This is essential in gauging a student's progress.

Pace

Because some students are fast learners and others are slow, we tailor the pace to the capabilities of each student. Using the building-block approach, we must be satisfied that the student learns the first step before he or she takes the second step. We gear our program to be not only flexible, but also to facilitate close monitoring of the student's progress. With this flexibility, if a student is falling off or is experiencing problems, the program content can be adjusted.

The Specialization Contract

I require a very specific written contract negotiated between the student and me. In this contract I guarantee to provide a particular training program, outline all of the sessions, and state the goals or objectives that must be attained. Before the student comes to negotiate the contract, I learn, through the school counselor and during the initial interview, the student's personality, problem areas, and likes and dislikes. I want the instructors to be familiar with the students; this makes for a more effective learning environment. This personal environment makes the students realize they're not just numbers; in fact, we've

had instances in the past where students developed close friendships working with their instructors.

Life Goals

It is important to work with students' overall life educational goals. Students should realize they must go on to college--whether it's a community college or a technical training school--or even go on to get their master's degree, depending upon how high their career goals are. It's important that we as employers help them understand that we're not simply imparting technical skills. We look at the total person, not just the part of the contract that says the student will be exposed to learning how to program and how to run a computer and how to operate a sorter; they may pick up these skills, but they'll lose them in six months unless they have the interest to pursue higher levels of education. I often cite examples of former students who decided that college wasn't for them; today those people are working for me in lower-level jobs and attending night school trying to get their degrees. Then we show them some of the people who have been on the same entry-level job for the past ten years because they didn't go beyond high school.

My instructors and I feel that the Career Specialization students, compared to students in other programs we have supported, have been well counseled, and very few had

negative attitudes. They all came here understanding they had to work, and they worked hard; they showed an interest. In many instances, our professional people have extra work because they are spending time with a student. But if they feel they can see the students enjoying what they're doing, if they see them learning something, then that is their reward.

Too often we do not train high school students to go out into the adult world to contribute to the working society; these students are in an academic environment and don't know what the real world is like. It's rare then that students can get this kind of exposure in high school. This program provides an excellent opportunity for me, in a very small way, to expose students to the real world. <u>They</u> are the future.

FIND YOUR OWN SPECIALIZATION

The surest way to have a specialization is to go out and find one for yourself. The number of coordinators able to find specialization employers is limited, but the number of students who want to work on a personal occupational interest is great. To boost your chance of a specialization, we want you to help in the employer recruitment program.

What Do I Do First?

First you must determine what your occupational interest area is. Do you want to find out about being an auto mechanic, nurse, secretary, lawyer, architect, or carpenter?

Who Should I Ask To Be My Employer?

The best people to approach are those you know, people in your family or friends of your family. Ask around to see if any of your friends know someone you can work with. If you can't find any contacts through family or friends, then you have to go right to the business sites. If you want to be an auto mechanic, for example, first determine where this job is found (auto mechanics are found in gas stations, body shops, institute or large motor pools, the military service, etc.), then go to those places and talk to the person in charge. If you don't know where to locate a job, ask your Academy coordinator for advice.

What Do I Say To The Employer?

Explain to the employer that you are a student in the Academy for Career Education, located at Olney High School. The Academy program teaches students about jobs that are available to them after high school or college. Explain that you spend one day a week away from school working with people in the community. You might describe the clusters or specializations you were in before and the kinds of people you worked with.

Find Your Own Specialization

After you have explained your experience and background, tell the employer what you want: "I would like to assist you one day a week, free of charge." Stress the "free of charge" part. Employers love free help. Tell him or her you want to learn about the job. Explain what your career interests are, and how they can relate to what he/she is doing. If he/she seems at all interested, you can refer him to Greg Naylor or Ed Wheeler. If you can make the contact, we can take it from there.

If you have any questions about how to find your own specialization, talk to one of the Academy Coordinators.

Reference Notes

[1]Community person is used to describe individual(s) who interact with students at the resource site.

[2]Several students in the RBS/EBCE projects in Memphis, Tennessee, and Wilmington, Delaware, participated in paid specializations this year. They were part-time, after school positions that offered students opportunities to investigate a single career or area, like business management. In all cases, students were required to draw up a learning contract with written objectives, learning activities, and an end product. In addition, an outreach activity to test EBCE as a paid work experience was operated successfully this year. Located in Collingswood, New Jersey, this project offered exploration and specialization experiences to economically disadvantaged and unemployed youth. Financial support came from NIE and a CETA prime sponsor.

[3]Learning Supervisor describes the person who coordinates student activities at the resource site.

[4]The Career Specialization Activities Form on page 10 can be used to structure and assist the student or career development staff person.